

Paris Trial on Today in Kidnap of Moroccan Leftist

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Paris, Sept. 4—Thirteen men go on trial tomorrow—seven in absentia—in the

kidnaping of Moroccan leftist opposition leader Mehdi Ben Barka last year.

Ben Barka, 45, was never seen again after being snatched from a street in the heart of Paris in daylight on Oct. 29, 1965. He is presumed dead.

One of the absent accused is Mohammed Oufkir, 46, the Moroccan minister of the interior.

De Gaulle in Rage

The case has enraged President de Gaulle, greatly embarrassed his government, cost the head of the French secret service his job and led to a partial breach of diplomatic relations between France and Morocco.

Because of the unprecedented situation—in which the interior minister of a friendly country, the intimate friend of its king—is to be tried like a common criminal, there is a good chance the trial may lead to a complete break in relations, with attendant consequences for 100,000 Frenchmen still residing in Morocco.

Only six of the 13 accused—a mixed group of Moroccan and French policemen, secret agents, students and a newspaperman—will be present at the Court of Assizes trial.

Absent in addition to Oufkir, who, with Moroccan King Hassan's blessing, has refused to answer police queries except to give his "word of honor" that he had nothing to do with the case, will be Ahmed Dlimi, 35, director of Moroccan police; Naimi Mouloud, 29, head of Moroccan special services, and four French gangsters now in hiding.

Present will be:

- Antoine (Gorilla) Lopez, 42, an agent of the French secret service, an informant of the narcotics brigade and a friend of Oufkir.
- Marcel Leroy, alias Finville, 46, a top secret service agent.
- Louis Souchon, 50, a brilliant police officer and inspector of the Paris narcotics brigade.
- Roger Voitot, 38, a narcotics brigade inspector, Souchon's deputy.
- Philippe Bernier, 36, a newspaperman.
- El Ghali el Mahi, 30, a nephew of Oufkir, who posed in France as a student at the High Commercial School and was in fact a Moroccan police officer.

In summary, according to police, this is the complicated case:

At noon, on Oct. 29, 1965, Ben Barka was approached outside a Left Bank restaurant by Souchon and Voitot, who flashed their credentials and said: "The Boss wants to see you."

They put him into an official police car and drove to a house 12 miles south of Paris. He was received by its owner, gangster Georges Boucheseiche, one of the seven to be tried in absentia.

The other men drove away, and none of the six to be present at the trial ever saw Ben Barka again.

Back at the restaurant, Ahmen Azzemouri, a Moroccan student who had been with Ben Barka, had notified police.

Brother Informed

That night, Azzemouri's wife told Ben Barka's brother Ahmen, a Paris resident, of the arrest. Minister of the Interior Roger Frey was informed, on the next day, as were various investigating services.

Soon the mystery began to unfold. Careless talking by the late gangster, Georges Figon, led to the arrest of Antoine Lopez, who eventually told police the kidnaping had been organized on orders from Oufkir.

He also said the he—Lopez—had informed his secret service superiors of the plan (leading to the charge against Leroy). Two policemen had been asked to help with the kidnaping, Lopez said, and after the kidnaping, he had called Oufkir in Morocco. The next day, he said, Oufkir arrived in Paris and took personal charge.

Service Chief Fired

When the Secret Service Men's role became known, de Gaulle hit the ceiling. He fired its chief, Gen. Paul Jacquier, and placed the whole espionage outfit under

the Ministry of Defense instead of the premier's office.

By then, the disclosures regarding the operation of France's secret service had considerably bruised the de Gaulle administration's reputation.

An additional blow came when Figon killed himself. The hoodlum with literary ambitions walked freely about Paris for weeks, letting himself be photographed and revealing in interviews alleged details of how Oufkir had knifed Ben Barka to death.

When police finally closed in on Figon in a rented apartment, he shot himself. There are many Frenchmen who believe Figon was silenced.

The trial is expected to last for a month.